

Mark 2:1-12: Healing the Paralytic

Abstract

This exposition of Mark 2:1-12 examines Christ's healing of the paralytic as a lesson in spiritual and eternal priorities. The sermon explores three essential priorities for the soul: forgiveness of sins, faith in Christ, and submission to His divine authority. Through analysis of our text, the message demonstrates that Jesus' primary concern was not merely the man's physical healing but his eternal spiritual condition. The account reveals Christ as the divine physician who alone possesses the authority to forgive sins, and it calls both believers and unbelievers to recognize their need for His saving grace. The sermon emphasizes that nothing is more important than attending to the soul's eternal needs and surrendering to the one who has the power to save.

Introduction

Please open in God's Word to the New Testament Gospel according to Mark, chapter 2. I want us to read together from Mark 1:14-15 and then Mark 2:1-12. May God bless the reading and hearing of His infallible Word.

My wife and I are what is commonly known as empty nesters. Some of you here this morning are no doubt in that position as well. Like many of you, our children are now grown, married, and independent. At this point in our lives, we've had the time and opportunity to do certain things together that we couldn't when our children were younger, and our priorities were different. So, with this change, over the last few years, we've had a few occasions to travel together.

We've had the chance to visit Europe on these trips. One of the activities we enjoy doing together, no doubt because there are so many options, is visiting some of the great European cathedrals. Many are impressive and majestic structures, mostly hundreds of years old. Some of you may have seen them in person or viewed pictures of them. We've visited Notre-Dame in

Paris, Westminster Cathedral in London, Ely Cathedral in Ely, England, St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, St Peter's Basilica in Rome, and several others.

The Cathedral in Milan, Italy, is known for its three very large arched doorways, which lead from the church vestibule or lobby into the sanctuary where worship services are conducted. There is one doorway on the right, one on the left, and a central doorway. An inscription is carved into the stone above each of the three stone arched doorways leading into the sanctuary.

The inscription on the right archway entrance reads, "All that pleases is but for a moment." The inscription on the left archway entrance reads, "All that troubles is but for a moment." The inscription over the center archway leading into the sanctuary reads, "All that is important is eternal."

What these words are addressing, of course, are spiritual and eternal priorities. As you enter the sanctuary, the message is clear: nothing is more important than giving your full attention, your priority, to the worship, adoration, and praise of the one true almighty God of heaven and earth! The Word of God teaches us that nothing is more important in this life than the eternal needs of our souls.

Yet how contrary that thinking is to the masses of people in our generation who seem to give so little attention to the needs of their eternal souls! It was the prayer of a young theologian named Jonathan Edwards who prayed, "O God stamp eternity on my eyeballs." Mind you, this was before he reached the age of 20.

If I could summarize the account of Jesus' healing of the paralytic in Mark 2, I would say it teaches us about spiritual and eternal priorities. Why? Because of the eternal value of every soul God has made. A soul, as we teach our children in the catechism, which "can never die."

This morning, our objective is to use Mark chapter 2 to consider three priorities for our souls that we must give attention to. When I say we, I do mean we, both believers in Christ and

unbelievers. I'll break down these priorities into three easy-to-remember words that we can expand upon. They are **forgiveness, faith, and authority**.

I. Forgiveness

In our text today, and quite common in Mark's writings, we have a vivid and descriptive example of the Lord Jesus Christ ministering to a very needy person. In verse 1, Mark tells us that the Lord Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days. We learn in chapter one that the Lord had already healed many sick people and cast out demons in that town. We see that in verse 34.

As a result, he became very well known! Mark 1:33 says His popularity was so great that the whole city was gathered together at the door of Simon and Andrew's home. Getting up very early, the Lord slipped away to pray. Then, after everyone was looking for him, as we read in verse 37, He left Capernaum to go throughout Galilee, a region in northern Israel, to preach the Word of God.

In Mark 1:38, the Lord tells the disciples, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." Mark had told us, at least in part, what the main topic He was preaching was! Mark 1:15 records these words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

We see in our passage in Mark chapter 2 that the Lord returned to Capernaum, not surprisingly, doing what? Look at verse 2: "**Preaching the word to them.**" We can easily picture this scene, sitting or standing in a room packed full of people, so crowded that no one can get in the door, not even standing room only!

There were all kinds of people there, including scribes and religious leaders who were undoubtedly looking for a reason to accuse Jesus or try to trap him! As Jesus was preaching the Word, suddenly there was an interruption! Pieces of the roof fell on everyone, and then a man lying on perhaps a pallet or mat was lowered down in front of Jesus.

And that leads us to our **first priority**. We see it, don't we, in the Lord's immediate response to the paralyzed man! What does He say in verse 5? "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Here is a man with a great need. He certainly had a great physical need, as he could not walk. He was dependent on others to get around. His desire to come to the Lord was undoubtedly to be healed of his condition. But the Savior of sinners saw what this man needed more than anything else! It would appear Jesus saw what this man needed even before the man did! He tenderly calls him "son," an endearing word for "child" in Greek, and speaks to the man about sin and the need for forgiveness!

We see this time and time again in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Why? Because He is interested in the needs of the soul. He is interested in one's spiritual condition. Oh yes, He is interested in this man's physical needs, but above all, He wants to address his spiritual condition.

The same was true in Luke 7 when a woman was at the Pharisee's house with an alabaster jar of perfume. Luke calls her a "sinful woman." Do you remember the story? She wiped Jesus' feet with her hair and poured perfume on them. Jesus also said to her in Luke 7:48, "Your sins are forgiven."

So, we see the absolute necessity of forgiving sins as the first priority! Let me stop here and ask, quite directly, whether you know the forgiveness of your sins. Regardless of who you are, are you concerned about sin in your life? I hope you can see that the lesson from our passage is that God is very concerned about sin!

At this very moment, we are in one of two positions. We are either, as the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians chapter two, still dead in "trespasses and sins", or we have been made alive in Christ and know something of what the Psalmist knew in Psalm 32 when he wrote, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Where are you this morning? Is the forgiveness of sin a spiritual priority for you? We all have the same need as the man in our story who came to Jesus, unable to walk. We need to hear Jesus say, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” We may live in a different age and time, but man’s sinful nature is still the same!

Sin is a spiritual disease, and we should make no mistake, it has been and will be a lifelong condition! The Psalmist in Psalm 51 can write, “Surely I was sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Isaiah the prophet writes, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to our own way.”

We all have the same problem as the needy man in Mark 2. The only question is, have we heard in our hearts, “Son, your sins are forgiven?” I would not call myself a frequent or heavy Facebook user. However, I do get on it now and then. Somehow, I got linked or friended to a J.C. Ryle Facebook site.

Ryle was an English Evangelical Anglican Bishop living in Britain in the 19th century, a very prolific author and a wonderful teacher of the Word of God. I recently found a Facebook quote by Ryle that is relevant to our topic and explains why it is so important! He wrote, “How incredible it is that we do not hate sin more than we do! Sin is the cause of all the pain and disease in the world. God did not create man to be an ailing and suffering creature. It was sin and nothing but sin that brought in all the ills that flesh is heir to. It was a sin to which we owe every racking pain, every loathsome infirmity, and every humbling weakness to which our poor bodies are liable. Let us keep this ever in mind. Let us hate sin with a godly hatred. Never are men’s hearts in such a hopeless condition as when they are not sensible of their own sins.”

If you are in Christ, are you pressing on in your fight against sin? The famous English Puritan John Owen wrote, “He that has slight thoughts of sin never had great thoughts of God.” Let us remember the sufferings and death of the Savior so that forgiveness can be obtained. Again, from the Puritan John Owen, “There is no death of sin without the death of Christ.”

Do you recognize your needy condition if you are here without Christ this morning? Do you recognize how sin separates you from God and, as a result, you are in a perilous position? Do the words of the prophet Isaiah describe your situation? “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities, another word for sin in the Bible, have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his frame you so that he does not hear.”

Ah, but the wonderful news of this passage, and indeed the gospel itself, is that our Lord Jesus Christ is a friend of sinners! How wonderful that the Holy Spirit describes to us what the Lord Jesus is like in reaching out to those who need forgiveness of sin! In fact, in just a few verses down in Mark chapter 2. In verses 15 through 17, we read of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. When the scribes questioned this, Jesus responded, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

To summarize from our passage, we see the perfect physician of the soul and body! And we see the absolute necessity of forgiving sins as a priority!

II. Faith

We must move on to the second spiritual priority in our passage. That is also taken from Mark 2:5. It is something that **Jesus saw** as the paralytic was being lowered down from the roof: “**And when Jesus saw their faith**, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

The **second priority that we see is the absolute necessity of faith!** What we cannot miss from our passage is that true faith recognizes its needy condition and always comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. It does so despite the obstacles. In other words, there is a persistence to true faith! This is precisely what we see in this passage! Surely this reflects what Jesus saw!

This persistence in spite of obstacles is often found in various gospel accounts. Just a couple of examples, though many more could be given! Remember the story of Blind Bartimaeus in Mark

chapter 10? In verses 46 through 52, we read of a blind beggar sitting by the roadside. When he heard that Jesus was passing by, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him, telling him to be quiet, **but he cried out all the more**, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and called him, and after healing him, said, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Did you see the persistence and determination? Everyone was telling him to be quiet and sit down! Mark writes, “he cried out all the more.” “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Does your faith have a similar determination? You see, faith is not simply some feeling! It is often thought of in that way! No, faith always shows itself by action, by a determination to come to Christ! A persistence that doesn’t quit because you know Jesus is the most important part of your life.

Earlier, I mentioned the woman at the Pharisee’s house in Luke 7. She anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! Can you imagine the obstacles she faced in that culture? Yet Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” In Luke 7:50, He also said to her, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Although it was difficult for her, she knew she needed Christ and would not let anything stand in her way! So, it was for the four friends in our passage and, no doubt, the paralytic in Mark 2. They would not let anything stand in their way of reaching the Lord Jesus Christ! The house was packed, and no room was available. No problem let’s take him up to the roof. Then, on the roof, they had to dig through whatever material had been used to construct it. This was then followed by the difficulty of lowering the man into the house. Do you see the persistence that is evident in true faith?

Let me ask you again! Despite the obstacles of this sinful world, our sinful hearts, and the temptations of the evil one, does your faith look to the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, forgiveness of sins is essential, but it can only be achieved through faith in the Savior.

Can you sing wholeheartedly “My faith looks up to Thee? Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine?” True faith always turns to Christ. It relies on the Savior. True faith fully trusts and embraces the Savior, knowing we are accepted by God only because of Christ and what He did on the cross to pay for sin!

The Apostle Peter wrote, “To you who believe he is precious.” Isn’t that true if you are a believer in Christ? The Lord Jesus is precious; indeed, He grows more precious each day!

Maybe you’re unsure whether you’re a Christian! Let me suggest that you look to Christ. Open the Word of God and turn to Christ in the gospel accounts. Read God’s Word each day, sincerely asking God to open up the eyes of your heart to know Christ. In the Old Testament account in Numbers 21:9, God sent poisonous snakes as punishment for the people’s sins. After being bitten, all they had to do was look at the bronze snake that Moses made, a snake raised on a pole.

Jesus said in John 3:14, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” My friends, there are many snakes in our lives! They symbolize the sins that can easily weigh us down. By faith, we should look only to Christ.

III. Authority

This brings us to the final of the three spiritual priorities. **We have emphasized the importance of forgiving sins. We have emphasized the importance of faith.** Finally, I would highlight perhaps the most important priority: **surrendering to the one with the authority to forgive your sins.**

The people in this house learned a valuable lesson that day. They discovered something amazing about the Lord Jesus Christ. They learned that He is the only one with the right and authority to forgive sins. They learned that He is God in the flesh! Jesus is the eternal God who came into

this world to be both fully God and man! As the Apostle John wrote, “The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us.”

Now, some present, teachers of God’s law, thought Jesus was being quite disrespectful in telling this invalid man that his sins were forgiven. However, they were right about one thing. Listen to verses 6 and 7: “Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’”

What were they correct about? Only God can forgive sins! And Jesus then went on to prove that He was God. How? Look at verse 8. He knew their thoughts in His spirit. Then, at His command, the paralyzed man stood up and walked! This was the work of God and God alone.

You see, the act of healing this man was evidence that He is God and therefore that He alone has the right and authority to forgive men of their sins!

Now I must ask you an important question. Do you believe that Jesus is God Himself? Do you believe that Jesus can forgive your sins? That He has the right and authority to forgive?

What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Is He God? Is He your Savior? Is He the one who died for your sins? Is He the one who is able to forgive you of your sins and give you peace with God? He alone has the authority to forgive! If this is true, and it is, each of us must give ourselves to the one who has this authority? Don’t wait another minute!

The Bible says, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ you believe Him to be God, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you have faith, you will be saved,” saved and forgiven of sins. Jesus will receive all who come to Him!

Conclusion

The people left amazed! They left praising God, as we read in verse 12. May God help us to give ourselves to the one who has the authority to forgive our sins!